

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 ADDIS ABABA 3536

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, EAID, ET, US
SUBJECT: COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF ETHIOPIAN/US RELATIONS WITH
FOREIGN MINISTER

SUMMARY. WHAT WAS BILLED TO BE AN INITIAL COURTESY CALL
BY THE AMBASSADOR ON FOREIGN MINISTER DR. COL. FELEKE
GEDLE-GIORGIS TURNED OUT TO BE A SERIOUS TWO-HOUR SESSION
DEVOTED TO THE MAIN ASPECTS OF ETHIO-US BILATERAL RELA-
TIONS, WITH EMPHASIS ON THE PRINCIPAL IMMEDIATE OBSTACLE
TO IMPROVED RELATIONS, THE COMPENSATION ISSUE. MEETING
WAS FRIENDLY THROUGHOUT, BUT IT IS STILL DOUBTFUL THAT
FOREIGN MINISTER UNDERSTOOD -- AND MORE IMPORTANT, WILL
DO SOMETHING ABOUT -- MEETING OUR CURRENT BASIC REQUIRE-
MENT, I.E., THAT ETHIOPIA MAKE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS TO-
WARD PROVIDING PROMPT, ADEQUATE, AND EFFECTIVE COMPENSATION
FOR AMERICAN PROPERTIES, RIGHTS AND INTERESTS NATIONALIZED
IN 1975. FAILURE TO ACHIEVE PROGRESS WILL BRING THE
GONZALES AMENDMENT AND OTHER US LEGISLATION INTO PLAY,
THE MINISTER WAS REMINDED. AT THE VERY LEAST, THE FOREIGN
MINISTER HAS AGREED TO RAISE THE OVERALL ISSUE AND A
SUGGESTION FOR A PRACTICAL AND PRAGMATIC WAY TO MAKE
SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS ON COMPENSATION TO THE LEVEL OF CHAIR-
MAN MENGISTU. END SUMMARY.

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1. FOREIGN MINISTER FELEKE OPENED MEETING ON AUGUST 9
WITH A REVIEW OF THE PRINCIPAL RESULTS OF KHARTOUM OAU AND
BELGRADE NON-ALIGNED MEETINGS, WHERE HE HAD JUST REPRESENTED
HIS COUNTRY. EMPHASIS WAS NATURALLY ON POINTS PLEASING TO
ETHIOPIA, E.G., RESPECT OF SOVEREIGN RIGHT OF AFRICAN
COUNTRIES TO REQUEST OUTSIDE HELP. HE THEN TURNED DIRECTLY

TO HIS PLEASURE OVER INDICATIONS OF US WILLINGNESS TO CONTINUE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AID TO ETHIOPIA, A POINT HE KNEW AMBASSADOR HAD MADE AT THE CREDENTIALS CEREMONY TO CHAIRMAN MENGISTU AND SEPARATELY TO THE MOFA PERMSEC, MAJOR DAWIT. HE NOTED THAT AMBASSADOR AND PMGSE OFFICIALS HAD SIGNED UPPER DIDESA PROJECT ONLY A FEW DAYS EARLIER AND PRETENDED THAT THE LONG PMGSE DELAY IN SIGNING HAD ONLY BEEN AN ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEM ON ETHIOPIAN SIDE. ACCORDING TO FELEKE, THAT IS WHAT HE HAD ASSURED BOTH SECRETARY VANCE AND DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY HARROP IN NEW YORK DURING HIS MEETINGS WITH THEM LATE THIS SPRING. (WE, OF COURSE, KNOW IT WAS A POLITICAL DECISION).

2. USING THE MINISTER'S OPENING ABOUT AID MATTERS, AMBASSADOR WAS ABLE TO BEGIN WHAT TURNED OUT TO BE A FREE EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON THE LINKDAGE BETWEEN THE CONTINUANCE OF US ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE, THE INABILITY OF OUR TECHNICIANS TO OPERATE EFFECTIVELY UNLESS THEY RECEIVED COOPERATION AND NOT HARASSMENT FROM LOCAL OFFICIALS, AND THE NECESSITY FOR PROGRESS TOWARD SETTLEMENT OF AMERICAN CLAIMS FOR COMPENSATION. THE WHOLE DISCUSSION WAS IN THE CONTEXT OF IMPROVING OVERALL BILATERAL RELATIONS. CHAIRMAN MENGISTU HAD THREE TIMES CALLED FOR FRANK DISCUSSIONS IN HIS REMARKS DURING THE CREDENTIALS CEREMONY AND THE AMBASSADOR WAS RESPONDING TO THAT REQUEST, HE SAID. BOTH SIDES SEEM TO BE LOOKING FOR A NEW BEGINNING IN RELTIONS. CONFIDENTIAL

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3. AMBASSADOR AGREED WITH FOREIGN MINISTER THAT SIGNING OF UPPER DIDESA WAS SYMBOLIC OF THAT NEW BEGINNING. UNFORTUNATELY THERE HAD BEEN A "BEAUTY DEFECT," IN THAT ETHIOPIAN MEDIA HAD NOT MENTIONED ONE WORD ABOUT SIGNING ALTHOUGH PUBLICITY WAS FORESEEN IN BASIC BILATERAL AID AGREEMENT. (FOREIGN MINISTER AND OTHER ETHIOPIAN OFFICIALS PRESENT, THROUGH SMILES AND EYE MOVEMENT, ACKNOWLEDGED THAT COMPLAINT WAS LEGITIMATE BUT OTHERWISE DID NOT RESPOND.) AMBASSADOR THEN REVIEWED LARGE AMOUNTS OF RELIEF ASSISTANCE ALREADY PLEDGED, GIVEN, OR ON ROUTE -- AGAIN WITHOUT ANY PUBLICITY -- AND OUR INTENTIONS FOR FUTURE. (SUMMARY TABLES WERE LEFT WITH MINISTER, AND A TELEPHONE CALL THE FOLLOWING DAY FROM A SUBORDINATE TO DCM ASKING CLARIFICATION WOULD INDICATE THAT ETHIOPIAN SIDE IS FOCUSING ON AID.)

4. LOCUST CONTROL WAS ANOTHER AREA WHERE WE HAD AND HOPED TO CONTINUE TO BE OF ASSISTANCE TO ETHIOPIA AND THE WHOLE REGION. (HERE AMBASSADOR HANDED MINISTER AIDE MEMOIRE AND MADE POINTS ADDIS ABABA 3495.)

5. AMBASSADOR ALSO SPOKE OF FUTURE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE WE ARE INTERESTED IN PROVIDING AND POINTED OUT THAT WE ARE CONSIDERING AT THE TECHNICAL LEVEL A \$10 MILLION PARTICIPATION IN THE IBRD/IDA MINIMUM PACKAGE II FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT STILL THIS FISCAL YEAR, PROVIDED.

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CERTAIN CONDITIONS ARE MET. (HERE AMBASSADOR GAVE MINISTER TIME-PHASED CHART PREPARED MONTHLY BY AID LOCAL SHOWING AID PROJECTS AND ANTICIPATED OBLIGATION DATES.)

6. IN ORDER TO CARRY ON OUR AID PROGRAM, AMBASSADOR SAID WE NEED ASSURANCES FROM PMGSE THAT AID PERSONNEL SENT TO WORK IN ETHIOPIA PURSUANT TO PROJECTS APPROVED BY THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT WILL BE GIVEN FULL COOPERATION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND CERTAINLY NOT BE HARASSED. HE CITED THE MARKARIAN CASE WHICH WAS REPORTED IN ADDIS ABABA 3488 AND 3513. BASICALLY, USG FINDS IT DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND HOW PMGSE CAN SIGN AID AGREEMENT FOR A \$4 MILLION GRANT ONE DAY AND ARREST AN AID TECHNICIAN THREE DAYS LATER ON TOTALLY UNFOUNDED GROUNDS. AMBASSADOR LEFT WITH MINISTER A FORMAL NOTE RECAPING THE CASE AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED.

7. AMBASSADOR NEXT INTRODUCED TWO CONSULAR MATTERS AND LEFT INFORMAL PAPERS CONCERNING EXIT VISAS FOR AMERICAN CITIZENS AND/OR ETHIOPIAN MEMBERS OF THEIR FAMILIES WHICH HAD BEEN PENDING FOR MONTHS AND COULD NOT BE RESOLVED AT LOWER LEVELS. AMBASSADOR SAID WE FOUND IT HARD TO BELIEVE PMGSE WOULD ALLOW SUCH MINOR ISSUES TO CLOUD OUR RELATIONSHIP, PARTICULARLY ONES INVOLVING GREAT HUMAN HARDSHIP AND SEPARATION OF FAMILIES. MINISTER PROMISED TO LOOK INTO THE

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CASES, ONE OF WHICH IS CASE OF AMERICAN WIFE AND DUAL NATIONAL CHILDREN OF FORMER CLOSE COLLABORATOR OF HIS FOREIGN MINISTRY.

8. BUILDING TO THE CONCLUSION, AMBASSADOR THEN REFERRED TO FOREIGN MINISTER'S NEW YORK MEETING WITH SECRETARY VANCE IN WHICH COMPENSATION ISSUE HAD BEEN RAISED AS ONE WHICH NEEDS RESOLVING FOR OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS TO IMPROVE. FOREIGN MINISTER AT THAT ENCOUNTER HAD "ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITY" TO AMBASSADOR FOR WORKING ON PROBLEM AFTER HIS ARRIVAL IN ADDIS, AND THIS HE HAD BEEN TRYING TO DO. AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT THAT HE HAD SUGGESTED A PRACTICAL AND PRAGMATIC SOLUTION (KALAMAZOO SPICE CASE) TO PERMSEC DAWIT AT THEIR FIRST MEETING. THIS, AMBASSADOR REITERATED, WAS ONLY A SUGGESTION WHICH HE HAD PUT FORWARD BECAUSE OF ITS ADVANTAGES TO PMGSE -- THE SOLUTION WOULD NOT COST ANYTHING IN CASH AND WOULD GENERATE SUBSTANTIAL EMPLOYMENT, TAX REVENUES, AND FOREIGN EXCHANGE FOR ETHIOPIA. HOWEVER, AMBASSADOR STRESSED THAT HE HELD NO SPECIAL BRIEF FOR KALAMAZOO, IF THIS POSED SPECIAL PROBLEMS FOR PMGSE. THERE WERE VARIOUS POSSIBLE CASES WHERE PROGRESS MIGHT BE SHOWN TOWARD COMPENSATION. IT WAS REALLY UP TO PMGSE.

9. AMBASSADOR CONTINUED THAT IN RAISING MATTER OF COMPENSATION HE WANTED TO MAKE SURE THAT THERE WAS NO CONFUSION OR MISUNDERSTANDING IN PMGSE ON WHAT US LAW REQUIRES IF NO PROGRESS IS MADE. SOONER OR LATER, AND PROBABLY SOONER RATHER THAN LATER, WE WILL BE CALLED UPON TO VOTE ON A LOAN TO ETHIOPIA IN ONE OR MORE IDLI'S, AND AS WE HAD INFORMED THE PMGSE IN APRIL, WE WOULD HAVE TO VOTE NO UNLESS SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS WERE MADE ON COMPENSATION. IT MIGHT BE ON THE ADDIS SEWERAGE LOAN IN THE AFDB, OR EVEN ON THE IBRD/IDA MINIMUM PACKAGE PROGRAM II, A \$92.6 MILLION TOTAL PACKAGE AT PRESENT. LACK OF

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PROGRESS POSED PROBLEMS FOR THE BILATERAL ASSISTANCE PROJECTS. OUR FISCAL YEAR ENDED ON SEPTEMBER 30, AND ETHIOPIA WOULD SOON BE PREOCCUPIED WITH ITS ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS. AMBASSADOR AGAIN REITERATED THAT WE NEED ACTION ON COMPENSATION AND NOT MERE ASSURANCES THAT THE COMPENSATION COMMISSION WAS ACTIVELY STUDYING THE SITUATION. THE PRESIDENT HAD NO WAIVER AUTHORITY UNDER THE GONZALES AMENDMENT (WHICH WAS EXPLAINED). BECAUSE THE COMPENSATION MATTER WAS AN IMPORTANT BILATERAL ISSUE, THE AMBASSADOR HAD

PREPARED A LETTER FOR THE CHAIRMAN SUMMARIZING THE ISSUE AND POINTING OUT THE URGENCY OF SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS. HE WANTED TO BE SURE EVERYONE UNDERSTOOD THE IMPLICATIONS OF LACK OF PROGRESS. HE THEREFORE REQUESTED THE FOREIGN MINISTER, WHO RAPIDLY READ THROUGH THE LETTER, TO TRANSMIT IT TO THE CHAIRMAN, (LETTER ALREADY POUCHED AF/E) AND ONLY SIGNIFICANT NEW POINT IS SUGGESTION THAT PMGSE ASK REPRESENTATIVE OR REPRESENTATIVES OF ONE OR MORE SPECIFIC U.S. CLAIMANTS TO BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS IN ADDIS BEFORE END OF AUGUST.)

10. FOREIGN MINISTER IGNORED THE ESSENCE OF THE PRESENTATION. HE THANKED AMBASSADOR FOR HIS SUGGESTIONS BUT SAID THAT HE HAD EXPLAINED TO BOTH SECRETARY VANCE AND DEPUTY ASSISTANT HARROP IN NEW YORK THAT THE COMPENSATION COMMISSION IS STYING THE CLAIMS. THE UNITED STATES WOULD NOT LET SUCH PALTRY SUMS AFFECT OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS, PARTICULARLY PRIVATE CLAIMS BY COMPANIES WHICH OFTEN HAD ENGAGED IN DUBIOUS SCHEMES WITH MEMBERS OF THE FORMER REGIME. THE AMBASSADOR REJOINED THAT THERE WERE INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS AND MISSIONARIES WHO HAD LOST THEIR PROPERTY, AS WELL AS CORPORATE CLAIMS. IT WAS NOT THE AMOUNTS, WHICH ADMITTEDLY WERE SMALL, ESPECIALLY IN RELATION TO THE CLAIMS OF SOME OTHER COUNTRIES. IT WAS SIMPLY THAT THE GONZALES AMENDMENT DID NOT PROVIDE THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH WITH ANY FLEXIBILITY, AND THE AMBASSADOR DID NOT WANT ETHIOPIA TO BE SURPRISED.

11. SINCE AMBASSADOR HAD MENTIONED KALAMAZOO, THE MINISTER
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FELT CALLED UPON TO POINT OUT THAT KALAMAZOO WAS GUILTY OF A "CONDEMNABLE ACT" IN RESTRAINING THE FREE FLOW OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE BY CONFISCATING FOREIGN EXCHANGE WHICH

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BELONGED TO THE NATIONAL BANK OF ETHIOPIA (BY ACCEPTING AND NOT PAYING FOR PRODUCT SHIPPED BY ITS FORMER SUBSIDIARY ON OPEN ACCOUNT IN 1975). AMBASSADOR NOTED HE HAD ALREADY TOLD HEAD OF ECONOMIC DEPARTMENT OF MOFA THAT HE WOULD WELCOME AND TRANSMIT MINISTRY'S WRITTEN LEGAL OPINION ON THIS ASPECT AND CONFIRMED HIS WILLINGNESS. MINISTER THEN PROMISED TO TRANSMIT LETTER TO CHAIRMAN AND PROMISED THAT COMPENSATION COMMISSION WOULD STUDY KALAMZOO PROPOSAL, ALTHOUGH HE INDICATED OUTCOME WOULD BE CLEARLY NEGATIVE.

12. MINISTER CONTINUED BY MAKING COMMENTS SUCH AS "ETHIOPIA HAD ALREADY PAID ITS DEBTS IN BLOOD TO U.S. IN KOREA AND THE CONGO." HE STATED ETHIOPIA HAD PRACTICALLY NOTHING TO SHOW FOR NEARLY 30 YEARS OF CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH THE U.S., (AMBASSADOR INTERJECTED IMPORTANCE OF ECONOMIC AID SINCE 1952 WHICH MINISTER GRUDGINGLY ACKNOWLEDGED.) AND NOW HE WONDERED HOW U.S. COULD LET A QUARREL OVER SPICES GET IN THE WAY OF IMPROVED RELATIONS WHICH BOTH COUNTRIES WANTED. HE GUARANTEED THAT ETHIOPIA WOULD PAY FOR LEGITIMATE COMPENSATION CLAIMS BUT THOUGHT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO TALK ABOUT IMPROVED RELATIONS FIRST. HE THEN THREW IN NEW QUESTION OF US AIRLINE COMPANIES ALLEGEDLY OWING MILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES FOR "TICKET SALES", THE FIRST WE HAD EVER HEARD
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OF SUCH ISSUE. (CERTAINLY EAL OFFICIALS HAVE NEVER RAISED IT WITHIN THE MEMORY OF ANY OFFICER SERVING AT EMBASSY ADDIS NOW. HE ALSO RAISED UNDELIVERED ARMS ON WHICH ETHIOPIA HAD MADE DOWNPAYMENT OF MILLIONS. AMBASSADOR REJOINED THAT HE THOUGHT QUESTION OF GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNMENT DEBT WAS NOT GOOD ARGUMENT FROM PMGSE STANDPOINT AS ETHIOPIA HAD \$16 MILLION IN PROMISSORY NOTES FOR MILITARY EQUIPMENT SOLD ON CREDIT AND HAD DEFAULTED ON SOME. TOTAL VALUE OF PROMISSORY NOTES FAR OUTWEIGHTED DEPOSIT, NOT TO MENTION OTHER DEBTS IN ASMARA.

13. FOREIGN MINISTER THEN GAVE HIS STANDARD REVIEW OF ETHIO-US RELATIONS OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, DESCRIBING ETHIOPIA'S POLICY AS TRUE NON-ALIGNMENT AND CITING PARTICULARLY OUR FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND THE ETHIOPIAN REVOLUTION. AMBASSADOR INTERJECTED THAT WE DID SYMPATHIZE WITH SOME OF THE OBJECTIVES OF REVOLUTION, SUCH AS LAND REFORM, AND MOST OF OUR AID

PROJECTS WERE DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY TO COOPERATE IN MEETING MUTUALLY AGREED UPON OBJECTIVES CONSISTENT WITH ETHIOPIA'S REVOLUTIONARY POLICIES. SPEAKING OF REVOLUTION, WE WERE BORN IN A REVOLUTIONARY WAR, AND WE OWED OUR FINAL VICTORY AT YORKTOWN LARGELY TO THE ARMY OF FRENCH GENERAL ROCHAMBEAU AND EVEN MORE PARTICULARLY TO THE BLOCKADING FLEET OF FRENCH ADMIRAL DEGRASSE. FRANCE WAS OUR FIRST ALLY, BUT THE ARMY AND FLEET DID NOT STAY ON IN AMERICA AFTER THE VICTORY WAS WON, AND THAT HAD BEEN A MAJOR FACTOR IN THE ENTHUSIASM WITH WHICH THE U.S. WENT TO FRANCE'S ASSISTANCE IN 1917.

14. THE MINISTER GOT THE POINT, AND HIS COLLEAGUES ENJOYED IT. THE MINISTER, HOWEVER, RESUMED HIS LITANY. THE U.S. HAD GIVEN ENCOURAGEMENT TO SOMALI AGGRESSION. WE HAD FAILED TO SUPPLY A TRADITIONAL ALLY WITH ARMS IN ITS HOUR OF DIRECT NEED, AND FINALLY THERE WAS ETHIOPIA'S MAGNANIMITY--
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IN RESPONSE TO A U.S. REQUEST -- IN NOT INVADING SOMALIA. WHEN HE CONTINUED ON TO BERATE US ABOUT HOSTILE U.S. PRO-PAGANDA TOWARD ETHIOPIA, THE AMBASSADOR DID NOT FAIL TO NOTE THAT THE ETHIOPIA MEDIA WERE FILLED WITH VIOLENT AND OFTEN UNTRUE ATTACKS ON THE UNITED STATES, ITS LEADERS AND POLICIES. WHY EVEN THE DAY BEFORE WHEN HE HAD PAID A COURTESY CALL ON THE MINISTER OF CULTURE HIS PATH TO THE MINISTER'S OFFICE HAD BEEN BLAZED BY VICIOUS "YANKEE GO HOME" CARTOONS ALONG THE CORRIDORS OF THE MINISTRY SHOWING UNCLE SAM BEING SIMULTANEOUSLY THROTTLED AND HIT OVER THE HEAD BY GOOD SOCIALISTS.

5. FELEKE THEN SHIFTED TO A SOFTER LAMENT THAT ARAB FRIENDS OF THE UNITED STATES WERE CONDUCTING ARELIGIOUS JIHAD AGAINST ETHIOPIA, AS THEY HAD FOR CENTURIES. THEY WERE AIDING DISSIDENTS IN THE NORTH, AS THEY HAD AIDED AND CONTINUED TO AID THE SOMALI AGGRESSOR. THE AMBASSADOR REFERRED TO THE TALKING POINTS ON SOMALIA, HE HAD LEFT FOR MAJOR DAWIT, AND THE MINISTER SAID HE WAS FAMILIAR WITH THEM. AMBASSADOR CONTINUED THAT USG HAD BEEN TRADITIONAL SUPPORTER OF ETHIOPIAN POSITION THAT ERITREA IS PART OF ETHIOPIA. WE, BRITISH AND FRENCH HAD TAKEN POSITION IN FAVOR OF ASSOCIATING ERITREA WITH ETHIOPIA AGAINST SOVIETS AND ITALIANS AS FAR BACK AS 1950. HE ALSO REASSURED FOREIGN MINISTER THAT US RECOGNIZED ETHIOPIA'S RIGHT TO DEFEND ITSELF WITH OUTSIDE HELP AND EXPRESSED DELIGHT IN MINISTER'S ASSURANCES THAT ETHIOPIA INTENDS TO FOLLOW A FIRM POSITION OF NON-ALIGNMENT IN THE CONDUCT OF ITS FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

16. CONVERSATION WAS CORDIAL THROUGHOUT, BUT THERE IS LITTLE REASON TO HOPE THAT MUCH PROGRESS ON MAJOR ISSUES WILL BE FORTHCOMING WITHOUT MENGISTU'S PERSONAL ATTENTION, IF THEN.
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